

December 7, 2010

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia: Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 1540 supports the goal of eliminating illegal marijuana cultivation on Federal lands, and calls on the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy to develop a coordinated strategy to defeat Mexican drug trafficking organizations and other criminal groups.

Marijuana growers have begun to use public lands because of their remoteness and difficulty in seizing or tracing the drugs to any specific owner. These large-scale plantations are being operated by well-armed and well-financed Mexican drug trafficking organizations and other criminal groups. Law enforcement officials report that the criminal groups that grow marijuana on Federal forest lands will shoot at police or at any other unwelcome visitors in order to protect their crops.

The National Drug Intelligence Center in the Department of Justice issued a national drug threat assessment in February in which it reported that the number of marijuana plants removed from public lands had increased by more than 300 percent from just 2004 to 2008. This increase was spurred primarily by marijuana crops overseen by Mexican drug cartels.

In 2008, a separate National Drug Intelligence Center report on cartel-related drug trafficking organizations found that the federation and other undetermined cartels were active in Oregon. In addition, a recent Drug Enforcement Agency investigation uncovered evidence of growers cultivating marijuana on public lands in Oregon and California.

The goal of this resolution is to bring attention to this illicit cartel activity and to encourage officials to develop an interagency strategy to stop drug cartels from using Federal lands for large-scale illegal drug crop operations.

I urge my colleagues to support the resolution.